

To: Judiciary Committee Chair Smith, Vice Chair Senator Waldstreicher and  
Committee Members

A Favorable Vote for SB 51

I am a constituent of Senator Folden in District 4. Here in Frederick County as elsewhere in the country we mourn the death of another black man at the hands of police. Frederick County officials and law enforcement heads, Sheriff Jenkins, Chief Ladino have spoken out on Tyree Nichol's death by Memphis police officers, all pleading for a change in police practices and culture.

All ask what can be done to stop this kind of police violence: we know it can happen in Frederick County. More training? Not so long ago in 2008, trained correctional officers severely beat an inmate at Roxbury Correctional Institute where I was employed as a social worker. As a parent and grandparent of bi-racial children I live with the fear even here that a stop and search police encounter will turn violent. My children live with that fear every day even though they have no police records: they are just people of color.

SB 51's proposed ban on police stops and searches solely on the odor of marijuana is something that can be done immediately to get at the problem of aggressive police action that deepens mistrust of law enforcement and prejudices against people of color. And at this time with recreational use of marijuana on the books there can be no reasonable cause for such a stop.

It seems SB 51 is a bill on which committee members regardless of party affiliation as well as citizens of different parties can unite. I ask for a favorable vote on SB 51.

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